

THE COLUMBUS CENTURY

In the course of a lecture, which was entitled 'The Columbus Century,' delivered recently before the Catholic Societies of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Dr. James J. Walsh, dean of the Fordham University Medical School, New York, said:—Ordinarily it is presumed that the discovery of America was partly accidental and partly due to the obstinacy of a man who somehow had become possessed of the idea that by sailing westward he would reach land on the other side of the globe. The discovery itself was of so much importance that it started men's minds into thinking for themselves and so was the beginning of our modern period. As a matter of fact, however, the century from 1450 to 1550 in which Columbus' great work was accomplished has more great discoveries in it than perhaps any other century in the history of humanity.

Three Famous Names.

There are three men whose names begin with K sounds who are always associated in that last half of the fifteenth century. They are Columbus, Copernicus, and a Kempis. Columbus discovered a new world, Copernicus revealed a new universe, and a Kempis gave man the geography of the new world within his own soul. Probably nothing has so changed man's point of view with regard to himself and the universe as Copernicus' discovery that the earth was not the centre of the universe, nor was even our sun, though all the immense planets go round it, but that creation as we know it extends far beyond human vision. The earth instead of being the most important body was only a little ball of mud on which we creatures of to-day live and somehow think that we are so important though we are comparatively so unimportant in ourselves and only the Creator's interest in us gives us any place.

a Kempis' little book has been more read or at least is said to have influenced men more than any book that ever came from the hand of man, the Scriptures coming from the hand of God. All sorts of conditions of men and women of letters, philosophers, clergymen, judges, lawyers, have read it.

There were a number of distinguished scientists and mathematicians in Columbus' generation. Cardinal Cusanus taught that the earth was round and that it moved like the other stars. Regiomontanus, the father of modern astronomy, made his tables and published them, and Columbus was able to calculate when the eclipse would take place by the prophecy of which he was able to secure help from the Indians when they refused it. Toscanelli made his famous observations on the comets and Behem made his maps.

Golden Age of Art.

It was in art, however, that Columbus' contemporaries were most famous. Three of them are among the most wonderful art geniuses of the world's history. Raphael was so great a painter that he had hurt art, because many men imitated him rather than imitated nature. Michel Angelo was a great artist, the greatest sculptor who has lived since the Greeks, one of the greatest architects of the world's history and a great poet. Leonardo da Vinci, their contemporary, made the greatest portrait that probably has ever been painted, the Mona Lisa stolen from the Louvre last summer. The French Government would not have taken a million of dollars for the painting.

All Around Geniuses.

The wonder is the universality of the genius of these contemporaries of Columbus. Leonardo was a great painter, who once beat Michel Angelo in a competition in sculpture, but he was also a great engineer who invented locks for canals and invented the wheelbarrow. He built fortifications in water, where men said it was impossible, invented new forms of decoration, laid the foundations of geology, was about to write a text-book of anatomy, and had done many dissections and anticipated the theory of evolution.

Michel Angelo was asked by Pope Julius II. to make a monument in Rome greater than the imperial Romans had left there. He put the Pantheon on top

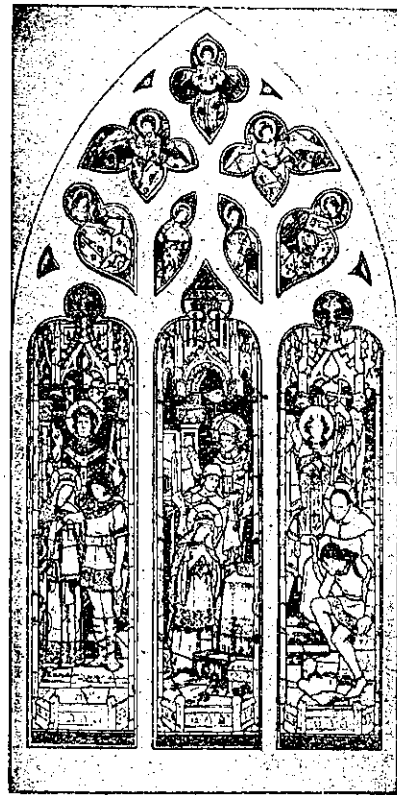
of the Coliseum. That is what St. Peter's is and more.

The ground plan is larger than that of the Coliseum and its great dome 125 feet up in the air before it begins to curve into a dome is larger than the Pantheon. The man who did this painted the Sistine chapel and it is a marvel of art, did the greatest sculptures since the Greeks, and wrote sonnets that are only surpassed by those of Dante and Shakespeare if even by those.

Other Contemporaries.

Nor was this all of the work of Columbus' contemporaries. They made great advances in anatomy. Vesalius, the father of anatomy, wrote his great text-book which is still considered one of the standard books on this subject. It is magnificently illustrated. A series of men in connection with the Papal medical school at Rome proceeded to lay broad and deep the foundations of our modern medicine, especially scientific medicine. There was Varolius, whose work on brain anatomy merits that his fame should be enshrined in the Pons Varolii, one of the most important structures of the brain. There was Eustachius, whose name is on the tube leading from the mouth to the ear, and whose great anatomical text-book is only second to that of Vesalius. There was Columbus, who discovered the circulation of the blood in the lungs, and Caesalpinus, who described the circulation of the blood in the body two generations before Harvey. The Italians rightly attributed to him the fame of the discovery. There was Fallopius after whom the Fallopian tube was named and to whom we owe many important contributions to anatomy, and Berengarius, the first to mention the appendix.

Columbus' century is not only worthy of him, but he is worthy of it. If he had not discovered America at this time, some one else would surely have done so. Its discovery was not due to an accident nor to the obstinacy of a crank obsessed by an idea, but came in the fulness of time.



Designers
and
Artists
in
Stained and
Leaded
Glass.

Memorial
Windows
A Specialty.

Herbert Bros.

BANK STREET
(Off Shortland Street),
AUCKLAND.

Inspection Invited. — Phone 1893.